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**“The Deadly Consequences of Illegal Alien Smuggling” Hearing
Chairman Hostettler Opening Statement**

“The recent tragic discovery of 17 dead illegal aliens in an abandoned truck trailer filled with more than 70 illegal aliens in Victoria, Texas, has turned the spotlight onto alien smuggling once again. This tragedy was compounded when two more of these immigrants succumbed to their injuries.

“Unfortunately, border deaths of aliens trying to enter the United States illegally is not a new phenomenon, rather the manner of death seems to have changed over the decades.

“Years ago, border deaths primarily occurred by aliens drowning or being hit by traffic while running across Interstate 5 near San Diego, for example. This latter phenomenon was the cause for CAUTION highway signs, like the one we see here in the hearing room, to be posted along Interstate 5 to prevent more aliens fleeing from the Border Patrol from being hit by traffic.

“In 1994, the Border Patrol began implementing a new border strategy, the best known examples of which are Operation ‘Gate Keeper’ in the San Diego sector and Operation ‘Hold the Line’ in El Paso, Texas.

“The new strategy focused on deterrence on the border to prevent illegal aliens from penetrating the border. This approach differs from the Border Patrol’s previous operational strategy that mixed deterrence with traffic checks, farm and ranch checks, and jail checks.

“The new strategy curtailed such Border Patrol interior enforcement activities significantly in favor of a greater emphasis on a show of force at the border to prevent illegal immigration.

“With these operations in place, ports of entry and nearby areas are more adequately monitored by agents, cameras, and motion sensors. Citizens in the San Diego and El Paso areas are pleased with the operations because they have caused a decrease in crime and closed down the alien smuggling corridors in their communities.

“According to several witnesses at a March 10, 1995, ‘Border Security’ hearing held by this Subcommittee, Operation ‘Hold the Line’ is humane enforcement of our immigration laws and has lessened the number of accusations of civil rights violations by federal officials, including the Border Patrol.

“In addition, the Border Patrol has launched public service advertising campaigns in Mexico warning of

the dangers of remote crossings and devoted resources to search and rescue training and operations.

“Illegal aliens still determined to enter the U.S. unlawfully cross the southern border at more remote areas, particularly in Arizona desert land, away from the ports of entry.

“In doing so, they disregard signs warning of the heat, lack of water, desolation, great distances, and dangerous animals. Not unexpectedly, some die from these conditions. Human rights advocates point to recent alien deaths along the border and argue that the significant number of deaths is caused by Border Patrol policies along the southern border.

“I totally reject this notion. We should not blame those who enforce our laws for the deadly actions of smugglers. Those of the Border Patrol who time and again have saved illegal aliens from dehydration, exposure, and violence are not to be blamed for the difficult job they carry out with professionalism and compassion.

“We in Congress have to ask why would people place themselves in such jeopardy to get into this country? It seems clear that aliens who subject themselves to smuggling believe the benefits of jobs and eventual green cards outweigh the risk of being caught and deported.

“In 1986, Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act which created two significant provisions: employer sanctions to end the migration magnet of jobs, and legalization - an amnesty for illegal aliens who had resided in the U.S. for a number of years. The goal of IRCA was to end illegal immigration with these 2 provisions.

“Clearly, IRCA has not worked. The job magnet continues because employer sanctions are not enforced and employers fear civil rights actions if they request too much proof of identity and work authorization. In addition, after the ‘one-time amnesty’ of IRCA, we now have 8-11 million illegal aliens here and people are again talking about another amnesty.

“Amnesty rumors encourage aliens to get into the U.S. by any means because once here, they know it is unlikely they will be deported and believe they will eventually be rewarded with a green card. Hence the dangerous smuggling and border deaths. It can be argued that advocating for amnesty for illegal aliens encourages smuggling and causes border deaths.

“I haven’t even touched upon the relationship between smuggling and terrorism yet. Available information indicates terrorist organizations often use smuggling rings to move around the globe. We are compelled to prevent alien smuggling and severely punish alien smugglers - not only to save migrants’ lives, but to prevent terrorists from entering this country with the intent to kill large numbers of people.

“By accepting illegal immigration and by not enforcing our immigration laws, illegal aliens are encouraged to get to the U.S. by whatever means possible, even if it means risking their life or their children’s lives. It is imperative that we enforce our immigration laws so that aliens are not tempted to risk their lives to get here.”